

Open Letter to the American People

2010
2011

It's influenza (flu) season again, and the public health community continues its commitment to protecting our nation against flu. Last flu season (2009-2010) is an example of how unpredictable flu can be. A new flu virus emerged called "2009 H1N1" that caused a lot of illness and was generally more serious for younger people than seasonal flu usually is. There were four to five times more deaths among children younger than 18 years of age than in previous seasons, and rates of hospitalization among people aged 5 to 64 years were two to three times higher than in previous seasons.

Beginning this flu season, health experts recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu vaccine. The flu vaccine is safe and is the single best way to protect against the flu. Over the years, hundreds of millions of people in the United States have safely received seasonal flu vaccines. Last flu season, about 80 million people in the U.S. received the vaccine made to protect against the 2009 H1N1 virus. The vaccine's safety record was similar to that of seasonal flu vaccines. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine protects against the 2009 H1N1 flu virus and two additional flu viruses that research indicates may cause the most illness this season.

Flu vaccines are available in many communities throughout the country. Now is the time to protect yourself, your family, your friends, and others you come in contact with from this potentially serious disease. You need to get the 2010-11 seasonal flu vaccine even if you got the 2009 H1N1 or seasonal flu vaccine last season because flu viruses are always changing. Last season's vaccine may not protect against the viruses circulating this season. Annual vaccination is the only way to maintain protection each season.

Anyone can get and spread the flu, even healthy people. While flu can make anyone sick, certain people are at greater risk for serious complications from the flu, including:

- older people;
- young children;
- people with chronic lung disease (such as asthma and COPD), diabetes (type 1 and 2), heart disease, neurologic conditions and certain other long-term medical conditions; and
- pregnant and postpartum women.

We remain committed to the fight against flu, but we need your help to win this battle. When you get vaccinated, you help yourself and your community by preventing the spread of flu. We ask you to join us in this fight by getting vaccinated. Remember, the flu ends with U!

Sincerely



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